

Why I'm Not Ashamed to be a Christian, Part 1 - Romans 1:16-17 – February 20th, 2011

- These two verses that we just read are, in fact, the "great theme of this Epistle," or as one said it; "the headline manifesto," for the whole book.
- Here-to-fore, we studied the Apostle's introduction in this, his letter to the Romans, and it just so happens to be the longest of all his letters.
- Now in verses 16 and 17, he sort of rounds a corner and ever so beautifully weaves this grand purpose into the fabric of this powerful letter.

One commentator, of Romans 1:16-17, wrote; "These two verses have an importance out of all proportion to their length."

William Newell in his commentary on Romans said this about these two verses; "Here we have the *text* of the whole Epistle of Romans: First, the words "the gospel"—so dear to Paul, as will appear. Next, the universal saving power of this gospel is asserted. Then, the secret of the gospel's power—the revelation of God's righteousness on the principle of faith. Finally, the accord of all this with the Old Testament Scriptures: "The righteous shall live by faith."

- There's something here that I would like for us to take note of in how Paul introduces this because as we'll see he does it throughout the letter.
- Paul will sometimes introduce something first, with the intention of preparing the reader for an expanding on it later as he goes on in the letter.
- I would suggest to you that this is the inspiration and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, as this is one of the most effective ways to communicate.

- One reason for this is that it is congruent with the logical reasoning with which we assimilate information, especially when it's huge like this is.
- In other words, it's easier to understand when we're first told what's going to be said, then to have it said, then to be told what was just said.
- Having said that, I think that we're now ready to open up these two big verses so the Holy Spirit can begin to minister to us the truths in them.

- I've titled this teaching; "Why I'm Not Ashamed to be a Christian." Today will be part one of a new series in just these two verses.
- Lest you wonder why and even how we can actually do a series on only two verses in the Bible, I think that you'll understand as we get into it.
- Be that as it may, the Lord has really impressed upon my heart that we as believers have absolutely no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel.

1. It's the truth (Verse 16a)

(16a) I am not ashamed of the gospel...

- Paul will now explain why he said what he said in verse 15 about being so eager to get to Rome, to preach the gospel to all that are in Rome.
- v16a The reason he's so eager to preach the Gospel, is because he's not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power and truth of God.

- I think it's incumbent upon me to mention something right out of the shoot, because it will become germane to our understanding of this verse.
- First, I want to clarify what this word "ashamed" means in the context of what Paul is trying to communicate to the believers there in Rome.
- The word "ashamed" as Paul is using it, carries with it the thought of not being embarrassed, or put to shame in having been proved wrong.

2 Timothy 2:15 NIV Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

- What Paul is saying here is that if we work hard and correctly handle God's Word, we'll approve it and even prove it to be the word of truth.
- Furthermore, in so doing, we will never need to be ashamed, or put to shame, by being proved wrong, because the Word of God is the truth.
- It was for this reason that Paul could so eagerly and boldly declare that the Gospel is the truth, thus there is no reason to ever be ashamed.

2. It's the power (Verse 16b)

(16b) ...because it is the power of God...

- v16b - He goes on to say that the reason he is not ashamed is because the gospel is the power of God. Now, notice what Paul doesn't say.
- He doesn't say that the Gospel can have power, he says the Gospel is the power to save. Please don't see this as a play on words, it is not.
- Here's why; if the Gospel "can have" the power to save as opposed, to being the power to save, then you have just introduced an uncertainty.

- Conversely, if the Gospel is the power of God to save then you remove all uncertainty and ambiguity of saying it can have the power to save.
- Perhaps you're asking yourself why I'm making such a big deal about this distinction as it relates to the "power." Well, I'm glad you asked!
- It's vital we understand the why behind the what in Paul emphasizing the Gospel as being the power of God for salvation to all people.
- See, of all people, the Romans would have known a thing or two about this thing we call "power." Truly, Rome was all about having power.

Warren Weirsbe; "Power is the one thing that Rome boasted of the most. Greece might have its philosophy, but Rome had its power."

- Here's the take away; I should never be intimidated or cower in the face of opposition to the Gospel because it is "the" power of God to save.
- Let me say the same thing a different way; we have "the" power and it's infinitely more powerful than anything or anyone we may encounter.
- Here's a question; am I too timid to share the gospel with someone in a position of power when the Lord presents me with the opportunity?

2 Timothy 1:7-16 NIV For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (8) So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, (9) who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, (10) but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (11) And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. (12) That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. (13) What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. (14) Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. (15) You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. (16) May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

3. It's for salvation (Verse 16c)

(16c) ...for the salvation...

- v16c In what could be deemed a firm grasp of the obvious, Paul says that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all people.
- Let me hasten to say that this is precisely what sets apart the Christian faith from every other religion of man, or philosophy of man.
- Buddhism doesn't have any promise of salvation, and Islam has no assurance of salvation, unless you murder Jews and Christians.

- I would suggest to you that Christianity is virtually the antithesis of all these religions, which just for the record, are false religions.
- Often times I'll be asked by my boys how it is that I can be so sure that Christianity is true and all the other religions are false.
- My answer always comes back to this one simple truth, it's a relationship based on what God has done for me, not what I do for God.

- A couple of weeks ago when I went to Spokane to do my uncles memorial service, I attended the midweek study with Ken Ortize.
- He's teaching through the book of Hebrews, and on this particular study, he said something that I will never forget as long as I live.
- With all due respect to Apologetics, I know the Bible is true because, in it, God spoke to me things only He could have known about me.

- The reason for this is that Christianity is a personal, saving relationship with the person of Jesus the Christ, Who saved my life eternally.
- Then, the Word of God becomes for me, sixty-six books filled with intimate love letters from my Father in Heaven, Who loves me.
- In addition to all this, the Holy Spirit indwells me, and enables me to live a holy life, thus I am complete and fulfilled living a "whole" life.

- Now, why would I ever be embarrassed as a Christian if my salvation is God so loving me He sent His only begotten Son to die for me?
- If a situation ever presents itself, and I find myself faced with a God-given opportunity to share the Gospel, I should never be ashamed.
- The eagerness and boldness comes from the Gospel as the power of God to save everyone including them because they need Jesus.

4. It's for everyone (Verse 16d)

(16d) ...of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

- v16d Here the beloved Apostle packs even more into the end of an already packed full verse by saying salvation is for everyone.
- He even takes it a step further and says that it's for everyone who believes, then qualifies it as first for the Jews, then for the Gentiles.
- Again, maybe this is a firm grasp of the obvious, however, I think we take the everyone Gospel of Jesus Christ for granted.

- The reason I say that is because not just anyone can make such a claim that makes eternal salvation available to everyone.
- Especially when it comes to Jews and Gentiles. In all other religions, this would most certainly not meet the requirements for salvation.
- In other words, the Gospel is good news because God will not withhold salvation from anyone, and the only requirement is to believe.

- Conversely, it's not good news and it's certainly not the Gospel if it's not for everyone, as not just anyone could meet the requirements.
- This is where religion falls short, It's only for those who are good enough to keep the rules and observe all the commandments.
- Nobody can do that which is why Somebody became man in order to be that for us and instead of us, because of His infinite love for us.

- Now, back to our taking the "everyone Gospel" for granted; could this be the reason we're ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
- Here's why I ask this question; I am the only one who has the good news for everyone, and not just anyone can offer that to someone.
- When I come to the realization that this Gospel is that powerful and that's it's for all, then I'll have a sanctified strength and resolve.